

FlavorFeelings™ Taps Into Emotions To Help Customers Win Consumer Palates

IFF Flavors has formed a global team to advance its FlavorFeelings technology, a proprietary method for identifying consumer emotions evoked by particular flavors.

"Our customers are often focused on what consumers say they like, but liking isn't the only aspect that drives consumption. Emotion plays an important role in purchasing decisions," explained Sophie Lefebvre, Regional Sensory & Consumer Insights Manager, EAME. "FlavorFeelings is a powerful, proprietary tool that is working to identify emotions that are associated with particular sensory experiences. It will help our customers discriminate flavors along parameters that are important for brand claims, particularly those based upon emotion. For example, if 'vitality' or 'happiness' are part of the positioning, using flavors that evoke these feelings can strongly reinforce this claim used in communications such as packaging and advertising."

The FlavorFeelings method builds upon the pioneering work of IFF's Stephen Warrenburg, whose Mood Mapping™ process has been a valuable tool on the Fragrance side for more than two decades.

"Stephen is closely involved in the FlavorFeelings research that was adapted from his fragrances consumer insights work, and we are delighted to have his extensive knowledge and experience to make this process effective and successful for us and our customers," said Lefebvre.

The evolving FlavorFeelings technology has been used in a few customer test projects over the past few years, and initial successes have led to the creation of the formal team and the initiation of research efforts in several regions of the world. These will initially focus upon cold beverage flavors, with the process using small amounts of hidden flavor samples and a proprietary questionnaire to gauge consumer reaction.

"Our initial objective is to build our knowledge base of the emotions associated with the most important flavor types used in beverages, and to look at the influence of culture on the emotional profiles," explained Lefebvre. "This research will provide insights that will guide C&A in developing flavors when a specific fit to emotion is needed." The results of these efforts should be available by the end of 2008. Ultimately, formal research will be further expanded to other product categories as well.

Although FlavorFeelings research will be ongoing, Lefebvre notes that key learnings so far have been so promising that the technology is being made available for commercial customer projects on a select basis, subject to certain "Rules of Engagement." These include initially offering the technology only to global and strategic customers, and even then only on product development projects of significant scale and high launch probability.

"With so many products on the shelves and customers looking to better differentiate their products, we believe that emotion is becoming an increasingly more important marketing tool. Flavors, like fragrances, are very evocative and play an important role in emotions. They drive the consumption of products and can do so even more strongly if used proactively," said Lefebvre.

"The development of FlavorFeelings methodology is an outstanding example of our Innovation Mission in action," added Hernan Vaisman, Group President, Flavors. "It demonstrates that we embrace a culture of continuous improvement by offering a unique technology that will help our customers more effectively break through the noise. It is already making IFF an even more valuable partner, and helping to further differentiate us from the competition in a new and exciting way."

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One of the initial projects, for example, looked at the emotions evoked by various snack chip flavors among male consumers.